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# Lie Testing Peril Seen By Probers

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The Los Angeles Times

A congressional committee investigating use of the lie detector by Federal agencies seems to have established this basic point:

Be wary about polygraph (lie detector) examinations.

Not because there is anything wrong with the machine—as a machine—but because of striking testimony that most of the people who operate the machines have no business doing so.

Contrary to what may be popular belief, the polygraph does not detect lies. That is done by the person operating the device in interpreting physical signs—as recorded on a graph—of emotional changes induced by various questions.

In the words of chairman John E. Moss (D-Calif.) of a House Government Operations Subcommittee: "The human being is the lie detector, not the machine."

Then there is this observation of Prof. Fred E. Inbau of the Northwestern University Law School: "Eighty per cent of the persons operating polygraphs do not measure up to the standards we feel are required."

Neither statement was challenged during the committee's hearings last week. The effect was that a committee that already was hostile to the use of lie detectors is even more so with expert testimony on the record.

One source close to the committee does not rule out the possibility that the committee will recommend that the Federal Government abolish the use of the polygraph for job applicants.

"At the very least," he said, "the committee will recommend tough Government-wide standards for polygraph testing."

The committee is clearly disturbed by the absence of central control in the Government over the use of what Inbau said could be a "dangerous" instrument in the hands of an unqualified or unscrupulous examiner.

Inbau, it should be noted, staunchly defended the polygraph as a valuable investigative aid, provided the examiner is qualified. The difficulty is that even experts disagree on what constitutes a qualified examiner.

Polygraph testing has grown within the Federal Government with little attention being paid to the practice. The Moss committee's inquiry appears to be the first undertaken on Capitol Hill on a Government-wide basis.

According to the committee's study, 19 Federal agencies, employing 639 examiners, used the polygraph in the fiscal year ended June 30, 1963.

More than 23,000 tests were given, largely by military intelligence and police agencies.

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